



BMUG troubleshooting

— *the self-help guide*

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1. Introduction — BMUG Self help

including backup, Help Desk, Applecare & maintenance

BMUG is a self-help group. We share tips and knowledge and join together to build self-confidence in using our Apple computers. We are not a professional supplier of Apple troubleshooting assistance. It's fine to ask friends in the group for advice or help, but don't expect house calls, and don't expect people to help you if you won't *HELP YOURSELF!*

If you help yourself, you might experience a setback or two, but not a catastrophe. Ways you should help yourself include...

Backup — members must have a backup to get help from BMUG

Many computer problems are able to be fixed immediately if you have a proper backup. When we say a proper backup, we don't mean a few files occasionally copied to a memory stick or a DVD.

We mean that you have an external hard disk, which may be cabled to your computer or wirelessly connected, if it's a *Time Capsule*. That hard drive will need to be bigger in capacity than your computer hard drive, and you will back up everything on your computer to it automatically, several times daily. An external backup drive is the cheapest insurance you will ever buy! It safeguards your settings, your applications, your images and documents — absolutely everything.



Time Machine, which comes with your Apple, or *SuperDuper*, software you can download, are the two standard programs to use. They both work automatically, and they provide total security.

There is only one way you can improve on a Time Machine backup, and that is by having two backups! That way, you can alternate your backup drive weekly, and store the other one off the property. Even if you come home to see an empty desk top, with all your gear gone, you will be able to restore all your files to your new machine. If the friendly neighbourhood burglar takes your computer, you can guarantee he will also take the external drive. That's why you need a second backup.

Purists, like Don, recommend alternating backups with each program — a Time Machine one, then a SuperDuper backup. Each program offers advantages which you can research.

Backup is not an 'optional extra', and it is not something to get round to when you are more experienced. It is a foundation skill. Of course, we are always willing to help you get started with backup in the first place.

Help Desk

At every meeting, a roster of committee members will be ready and waiting to help you. You will need to book in to the Help Desk before the meeting by email, or arrive promptly and book an appointment in person.

To make a Help Desk booking, just send an email with details of your problem to:

[Help desk booking..](#)

Note: we are a voluntary self-help group. We will do our best to assist, but we can't be held responsible if our advice makes things worse.

We aim to teach every member how to problem solve for themselves, rather than functioning as a 'brains trust' with all the answers. The process we will go through is aimed to train you in troubleshooting, which is a foundation skill. Hopefully we will be teaching you more about it when you visit the Help Desk.

Our help will essentially be *triage*, following these steps:

1. Do you have a backup? No backup, no help!

But we will help you set up your backup.

2. Self help

Hopefully, we will know the answer or where to find it. If we don't, for most simple issues, we will suggest you need to research the Help files; do a Google search; read the appropriate BMUG manual; check out the help and troubleshooting documents and files on the BMUG downloads page.

The answer may be quite easy to find if we try together.

3. Have you rung Applecare?

If we can't help, then Applecare, which is essential insurance, will almost certainly do the trick. The experts on their help line are terrific. What! You haven't taken out Applecare! You certainly should.

Really experienced Mac folk who are confident troubleshooters themselves invariably buy Applecare with a new computer. Applecare offers 3 years of full support, including extremely helpful phone support and onsite repair at your home for hardware problems.



Applecare is essential insurance and it costs about \$400 for a laptop and about \$200 for an iMac. Preferably, you should arrange it when you buy the new Mac, since it can only be purchased while your Mac is still covered under the standard one-year limited warranty. Applecare is transferable when you buy a second-hand computer which is still covered.

Before you make the call, be prepared to answer some questions. You will find most of the answers in the About this Mac pane under the Apple menu bar:

You will probably be asked:

- What version of OS X are you running?
- What is the processor in your computer?
- How much RAM memory do you have?

You may also be asked about the version number of any application which is playing up. You can find the answer by going *Get Info* after highlighting the application file in *Applications*.



A complaint like 'Mail won't work' is unhelpful. Be specific.

4. With hardware problems, have you called the retailer?

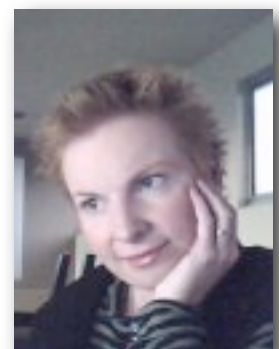
We may suggest this as the solution. Take the typical 'my new printer won't print' problem. They sold it, they are responsible for getting it working, though we acknowledge that Dick Smith or other big retailers may be very unhelpful. That is why we recommend buying from specialist shops. Typically, the retailer will give you the manufacturer's Australian Agent's Help Desk number.

5. Occasionally, you may need the services of a paid expert

Sometimes we will recommend calling in the cavalry. Every so-called *guru* on the committee has paid for help in the past. There are times, for example with complex networking issues, when there is no substitute for a paid consultant. BMUG confidently recommends the services of Tina Ridgeway, 0402 302 579, and Simone Bishop, 0425 871 823.



Tina Ridgeway, MacBuddies
— 0402 302 579, at left...



Simone Bishop, Jim's Computers
— 0425 871 823, at right...

2. Using OS X reference books and help sites

Reference books

Every experienced Mac user I know has a reference book, and it's usually a David Pogue. His big book on Snow Leopard is invaluable, and there are very few troubleshooting issues he doesn't cover :

I invariably have my copy of Pogue open beside the computer when I'm writing manuals or newsletter articles.



Help sites

Try a Google search first. Ask your question in plain language, mentioning Apple, for example: "Apple OS X freezes on startup". You will usually find many people have experienced the same issue and that someone has posted a solution on one of thousands of help sites. Here is a list of very helpful Apple sites to check if a general search doesn't turn up the solution...

Apple Help Links:

[Apple Support...](#)

[Apple discussions of every kind of Mac issue](#)

[Mac OS X Hints...](#)

[OS X Help — simple tutorials...](#)

BMUG manuals

BMUG produce a large number of easy to read manuals on specific topics. You can buy them at our meetings or by mail order from our website. We are even able to deal with international mail orders.

[Link to the BMUG manuals page...](#)

BMUG newsletters

Our club newsletter generally includes several Top Tips — simple but invaluable pieces of advice on running your Mac. Committee member Margaret Evans prints them off and collects them in a folder for future reference. Back copies of the newsletter may be downloaded from the link below.

[BMUG newsletter...](#)

3. My new printer or scanner won't work

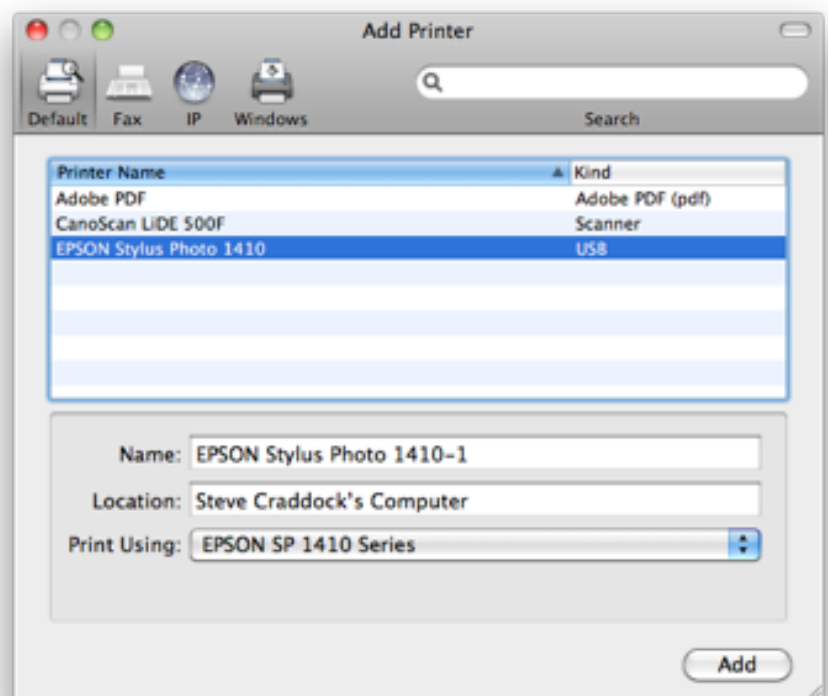
A printer or scanner connects to your computer via piece of software called the *driver*. Generally speaking, hooking up a new peripheral is easy, and it just works, but sometimes it doesn't...

It is probably not a good idea to insert the printer software CD and install it on your computer, even though the instructions say you should. Invariably, the software is old and out of date, and it's very likely you don't need any of it, anyway. So what should you do, after cabling the printer and powering it up?

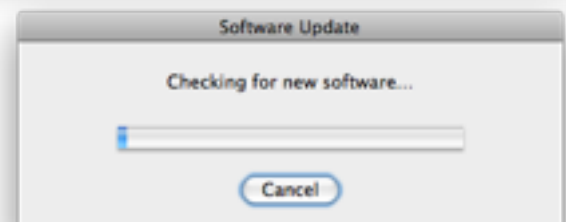
Go to System Preferences — Print & Fax

and click the + button to add the new printer.

You will probably already have an appropriate printer driver (the software to interface with your printer) pre-installed along with the system software, so you will be able to select it in the drop-down menu, as you see at left.



You should also go to Software Update, after adding the new printer. This tool will tell you if there are any more recent versions of the printer driver which you should download.



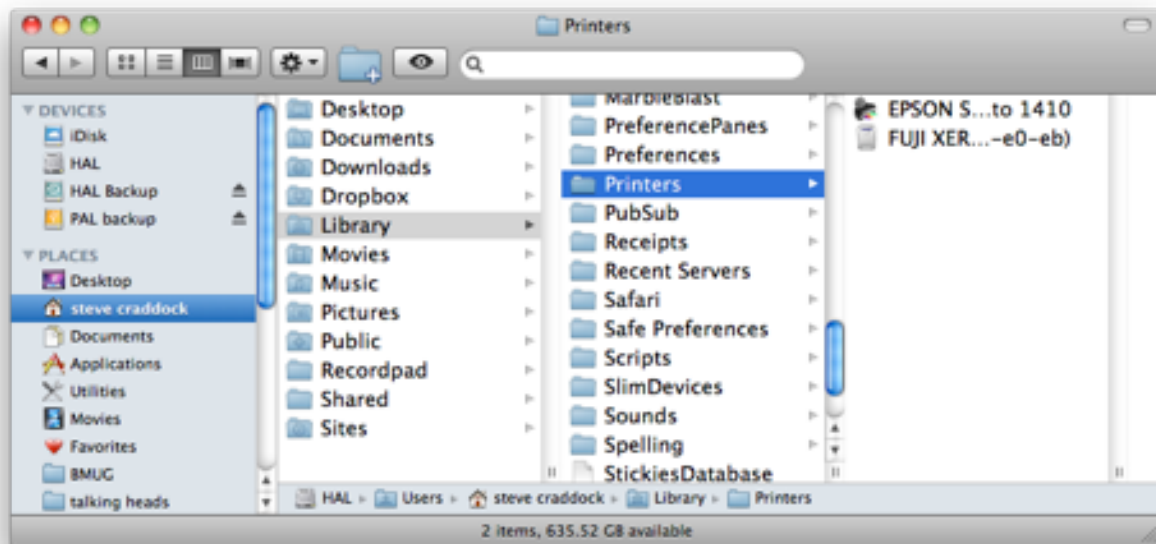
Just occasionally, you need to do some manual work yourself to get the right printer drivers installed. Every printer has a gigantic (and very confusing) download page to get the software from.

Finally, if any of these steps appear problematic, ring the retailer who sold you the gear. They took your money, therefore they should help get the printer working by providing the right number to ring! This is not something Applecare will help with.

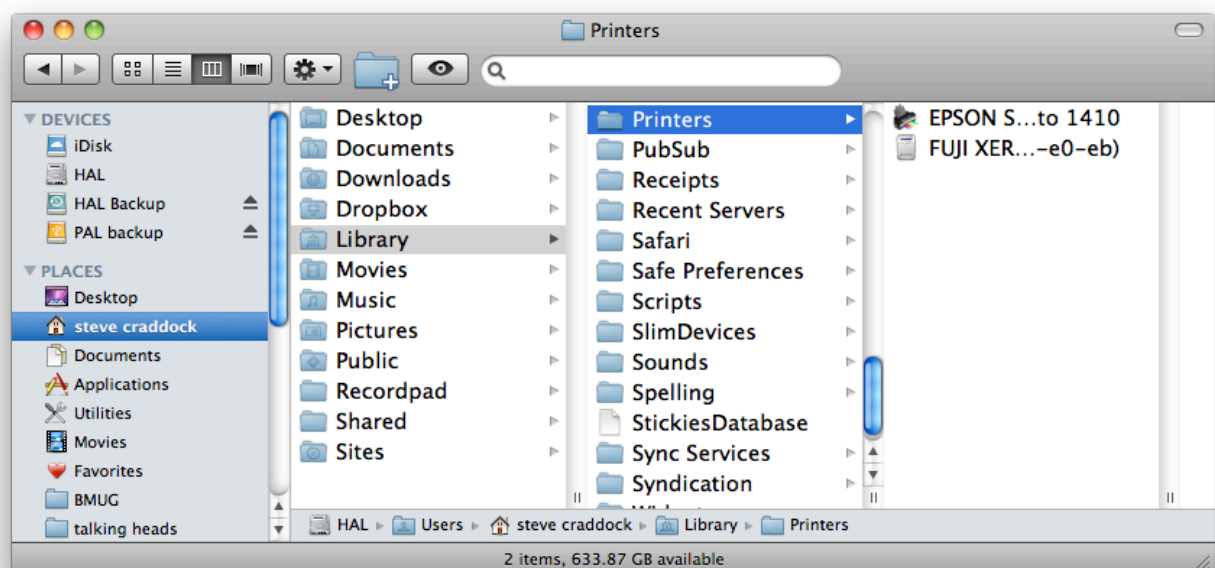
Looking under the hood

You've probably never checked out the printer software on your computer. If you did look into it, you would find that Apple installs an assortment of drivers for many everyday printers with the system software, just in case, when you install the Snow Leopard OS.

They live in your computer Library:



Further, specific drivers for the actual printers you use live in your User library. These are the printers you have added in the process described above. As you see from the screenshot, I have two installed, an Epson and a Fuji Xerox:



You will know if your driver is right if you have all the various paper and page size options your printer needs in your Print dialogue boxes. If it is an Epson printer, it will list Epson papers, if it is a Canon, they will be Canon papers, and so on.

4. Basic maintenance

Please don't get the idea that you've done something wrong if your computer starts playing up. Modern Macs are infinitely more stable than they were in the past, but they still have conniptions. Don't Panic! We can reduce the number of times we need to troubleshoot by carrying out regular maintenance tasks...

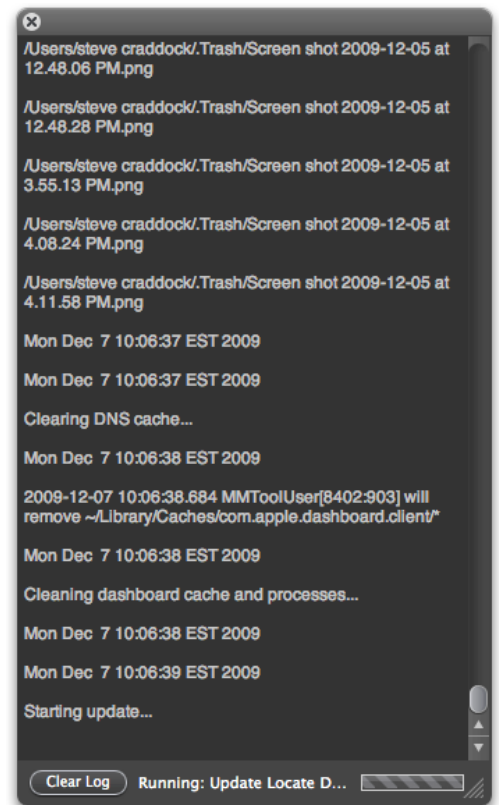
1. Turn the computer completely off regularly

It's tempting to just leave your computer running overnight for weeks, but every time it restarts, it runs diagnostic programs and repairs many little errors before they become major ones. When a small problem emerges, always try turning the computer and the offending equipment, which is often a printer, completely off, then restarting. In some cases, you even need to remove power leads for a minute or two, then replace them.

2. Regularly run a Mac maintenance program

We recommend main Menu and Onyx, and most keen users run them weekly or whenever an issue arises. Main Menu costs \$23, and Onyx is free. You set Main Menu to carry out *Batch Tasks*, and while it is running this window will show the progress:

Don't worry if you can't understand what it is doing, be assured it is good for the computer.



Running a maintenance program solves a typical setback...

I try to re-open a file I've been working on and it says it's already open or busy

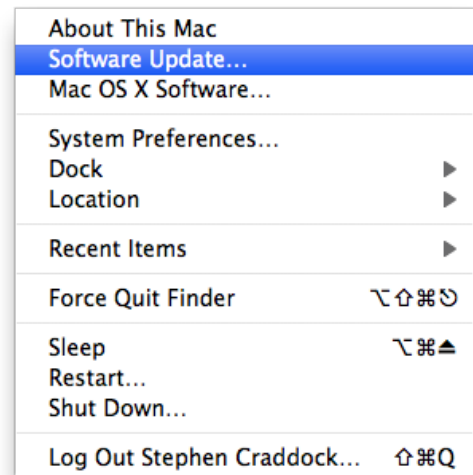
Any message like this is almost certainly caused by a permissions problem. We don't need to understand permission, but we do need to know how to fix them...

In a nutshell, if you get this kind of message, shut the computer down and wait a few minutes before restarting. Then run main Menu and go and have cuppa before you do anything else. If that doesn't fix the problem, I'd be calling Applecare.

Software update

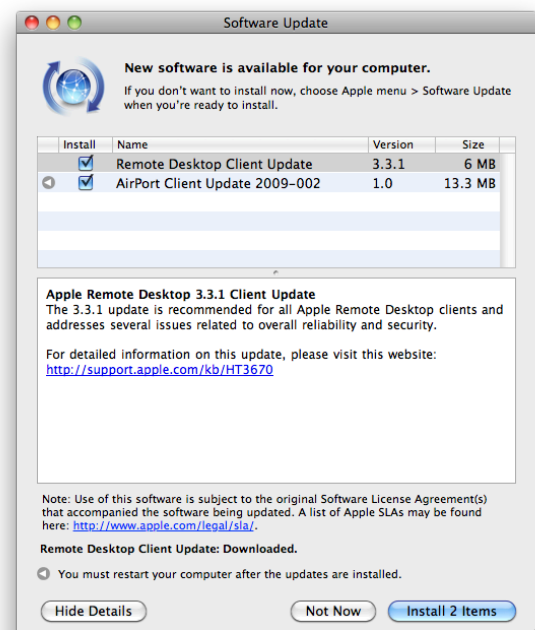
One of the most important reasons for having a generous download allowance as part of your Internet contract is to enable you to run *Software Update*, which regularly checks to see if updates to your Apple software are available.

To vary your Preferences for how often Software Update checks, go *System Preferences — View Software Update*: (in the top menu bar) then click on



Keeping your iTunes, Safari, OS X, and other programs right up to date is one of the most important piece of preventive maintenance you can do. Sometimes the downloads are big, that's why you may need to increase your download limit.

These were the updates I downloaded today:



5. I've deleted a vital file or folder

Fortunately, this is the easiest of all setbacks to correct. Suppose you have deleted a folder with many important documents, then emptied the trash. Just as easily, you might have done this to images in iPhoto. As you hear the *scrunch* sound, you think 'Uhhhh-ohhh!'

Alternatively, you may have made irreversible changes to a file and messed it up.

Time Machine recovery is dead easy because it performs the apparently magic task of allowing you to see what any file or folder was like an hour ago, or yesterday, or last week, or last month!

This is how we proceed:

1. Click the Time Machine icon in the Dock:

The starry Time Machine window will slide down like a curtain. Go into the Finder window, and search for the file that is playing up, and highlight it:



Click the big arrow pointing back. Choose a date that will take you back in time to the most recent version of the file that's different from the way it is now, in other words, undamaged:

2. Now simply click the Restore button

Your damaged file will be replaced. Time Machine will even place it in the correct folder.



Time Machine always asks the question 'do you really want to replace file X with the earlier version?'

Should you have an iPhoto'08, Address Book, or Mail problem, then Time Machine will work slightly differently. This is all explained in more detail in the *Backup* manual.

[Link to BMUG manuals at the club website...](#)

6. iPhoto locks up or pictures & albums are missing

This irritating symptom can occur on even on a well-maintained computer. iPhoto is much more than a folder with many images stored, it is a database holding all kinds of information about your pictures, and it can easily malfunction.

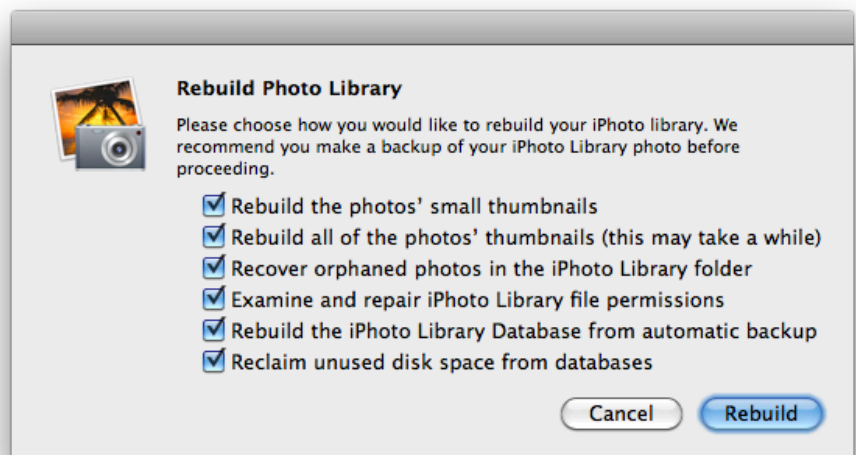
Sooner or later, most of us will eventually experience some difficulty with iPhoto. You may find the application locks up on startup, and you simply get the spinning beach ball.

Thankfully this is not usually a major issue, but prudent BMUG members know that it is important to have an up to date backup. If anything unrecoverable *has* happened to your image library, you will have the confidence of knowing you can always import a replacement from your backup. Hopefully, though, it will not come to that!

Your first step is to Force Quit out of iPhoto, as you do out of any unresponsive program, by hitting the keystrokes *Command – Option – Escape*, and clicking on *Force iPhoto to Quit*.

Now restart iPhoto, while holding down the Command and Option keys. You will get this dialog box:

For best results, tick all the options, and go away for a cuppa. This rebuild may take some time, but it usually solves any library problems.



However, if you are still experiencing difficulties, you may need to carry out a manual rebuild. Here are the instructions from the Apple iPhoto Help pages:

Additional Information Performing a "Manual rebuild"

If the rebuild option in iPhoto does not resolve your issue, you can manually reimport the photos into a new iPhoto library.

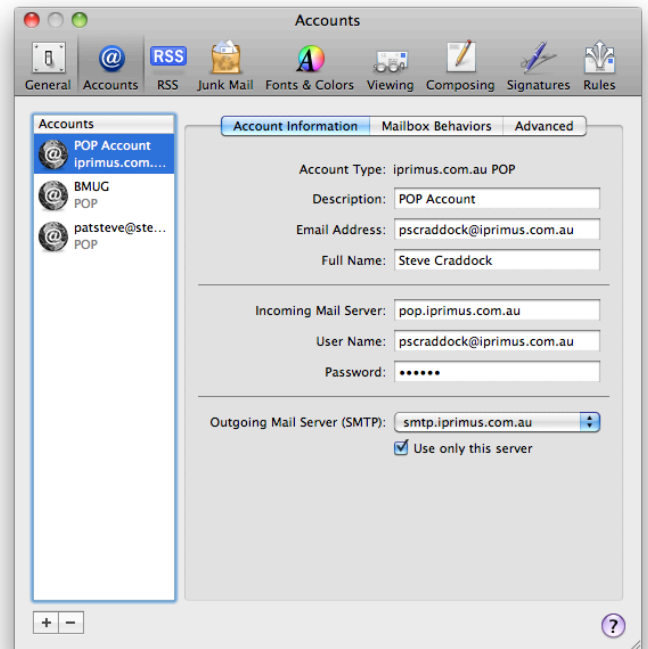
1. While holding down the option key on the keyboard, open iPhoto.
2. When prompted, select the option to create a new library.
3. Select a new location for the library, name and save it. Give the new library a different name than the original library to avoid confusion.
4. From the **iPhoto** menu, choose **Hide iPhoto**.
5. Locate the original iPhoto Library folder in the Finder.
6. Right-click or control-click the iPhoto library icon and select "Show package contents" from the menu.
7. In the window that appears, you should see two important folders, "Originals" and "Modified".
8. Drag the Originals folder onto the iPhoto icon in your Dock. This imports the original photo files that you imported into the original iPhoto library.
9. You can also drag the Modified folder onto the iPhoto icon in your Dock. This will copy over all edited versions of images you have previously worked on, including those which have been edited automatically (such as auto-rotated images which have been edited and then imported from your camera).

Note: Importing both your Modified and Original folders into a new library will result in both the original and edited version of each image, if applicable, showing up in your new iPhoto library.

7. Mail sends emails, but won't receive them (or vice versa)

This year, a number of people in BMUG, including several on the committee, have had this irritating problem. Generally, this problem is easily solved by working through the Mail settings windows in Mail Preferences and carefully checking the settings provided by your ISP. There are two windows to check:

Account information...

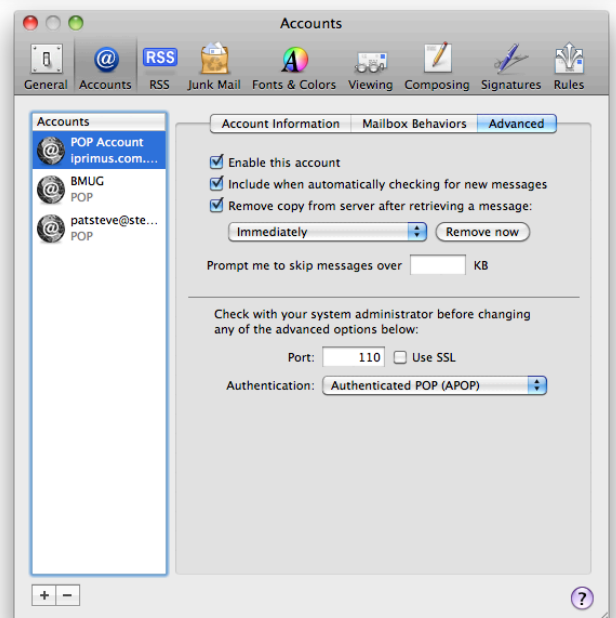


and 'Advanced'

The Authentication setting is usually "None". Many folks make the mistake of thinking they should choose "Password" and enter their user name and password here. In most cases this is not so, and doing so will render sending impossible.

Only a very few ISPs actually use Authentication of the "Password" kind, but if they do, the correct entries here are critical.

I would check this part of the setup procedure with the ISP before doing anything else.



In extreme, but very rare cases, a setting needs to be changed by your Internet Service Provider or by the organisation who hosts your website. I know, because this happened to me earlier this year.

People on holiday may experience difficulties in sending emails because their SMTP server may be blocked. This can be a complex issue you may need to discuss with a consultant and your ISP. Experiment by taking your laptop to a free WiFi location such as a McDonald's store.

8. My system bombs or has kernel panics

A kernel panic occurs when the underlying Unix software beneath OS X crashes. You may get this message:



You need to restart your computer. Hold down the Power button for several seconds or press the Restart button.

Veillez redémarrer votre ordinateur. Maintenez la touche de démarrage enfoncée pendant plusieurs secondes ou bien appuyez sur le bouton de réinitialisation.

Sie müssen Ihren Computer neu starten. Halten Sie dazu die Einschalttaste einige Sekunden gedrückt oder drücken Sie die Neustart-Taste.

コンピュータを再起動する必要があります。パワーボタンを数秒間押し続けるか、リセットボタンを押してください。

This is an extremely rare happening these days, particularly for people who run the latest system software and keep it updated. If it happens once, or very occasionally, it is a minor problem easily fixed by shutting the computer down, pausing, then re-starting.

Recurrent kernel panics are sometimes caused by hardware problems such as a failing chip. RAM chips are typically responsible for this problem, which can only be diagnosed and solved by putting the computer in for service. Applecare covers this kind of problem, of course.

Alternatively, your computer's OS X system may have been corrupted. Applecare technicians will talk you through various diagnostic tests and then help you reinstall the system from the system disks, if that is what is needed to correct the problem.

This gives an idea of what is involved...

Insert the OS X system installation disk that came with your computer. Hold down the 'C' key, while you do a restart. It will take some time to start up from the disk's OS, but eventually, you will be prompted to choose the English language.

Then you will be prompted to go on to do an *Archive and Install*, which will completely replace the faulty existing operating system.

Repairing your hard disk

Another option, when things go haywire, is repairing the hard disk. Startup from the Install disk as described above, go to *Utilities* in the menu bar, select *Disk Utility*, then run *Repair Disk*.

9. I've forgotten my Admin password

You will soon have many passwords for all the different tasks and organisations you deal with, but the most important of all is the Administrator password that enables you to install and upgrade software. People who forget this one can't even update system software as we recommended!

As above, insert the Apple OSX system disk and re-start the computer holding down the 'C' key. Choose your language, but *don't go on to the Install stage*.

Instead, in the Installer menu at the top of the screen, choose Utilities — Reset Password, and follow the on-screen instructions. This only take seconds.